



Department of Justice

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DELAWARE TAX PREPARER SENTENCED TO JAIL TIME FOR FRAUDULENT TAX PREPARATION

Charles M. Oberly, III, United States Attorney for the District of Delaware, announced that Ronald A. Bright, of Wilmington, Delaware, was sentenced on Monday by Chief United States District Judge Gregory M. Sleet to six months in prison and one year of supervised release for assisting in the preparation of fraudulent tax returns.

According to documents filed in connection with the case, Ronald Bright was a former Revenue Agent for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), where he worked for 18 years until he was terminated in 2001. Bright operated a tax preparation business in Wilmington, Delaware called "Bright's Accounting and Tax Service" since the 2003 tax filing season. In 2007 and 2008, Bright filed approximately 600 tax returns each year.

The investigation revealed that Bright routinely falsified and inflated various types of deductions and credits on his clients' returns, which led to over \$350,000 in lost tax revenues. As part of his sentence, Bright was ordered to pay restitution to the Government. The court noted, however, that many of Bright's clients also owe back taxes to the IRS because they received the benefit of Bright's false tax returns.

Bright was the second tax preparer to be sentenced in recent months. On February 16, 2011, Oghenovo Wilson Atavwigho was sentenced by Chief Judge Sleet to six months home confinement and a term of three years probation, for similar charges of willfully assisting in the preparation of false tax returns. According to court documents, Atavwigho operated a tax preparation business in Newport, Delaware, and prepared and submitted hundreds of false federal tax returns on behalf of his clients, in return for a fee. In a few cases, when his clients were audited by the State of Delaware, Atavwigho affirmatively advised them to submit false records to the State in an attempt to justify the false returns. Atavwigho's falsely prepared returns cost the federal government at least \$629,000 in losses in tax years 2006-2008.

United States Attorney Charles M. Oberly, III said, "By fraudulently inflating refunds, these tax preparers did a disservice to their clients, who now owe back taxes to the IRS, and to the taxpaying public. Bright and Atavwigho are now convicted felons as a result of their decision to use their knowledge of the tax code to engage in fraud. We will remain vigilant as

this tax season approaches to investigate and prosecute anyone who attempts these types of offenses.”

"Return Preparer fraud is a priority for IRS Criminal Investigation and we have committed many resources to investigating and prosecuting cases just like these," said Eric Hylton, Special Agent in Charge, IRS-Criminal Investigation-Philadelphia Field Office. "It is our hope that sentences such as these will send a strong message that tampering with the integrity of our nation's tax system can result in jail time."

For further information, please contact Assistant United States Attorneys Ilana Eisenstein or Christopher J. Burke.

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